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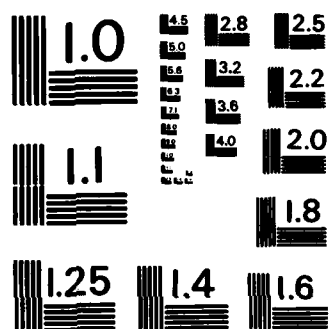


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TOWARDS A STRATEGY OF COMPETITION

by

Lieutenant Colonel Sterling P. Bassett

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This outstanding essay is a hypothetical statement made by the Secretary of State (designate) appearing before his confirmation hearing conducted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 21 Jan 1985. Student postulates that our grand strategy of containment has proven to be neither an effective strategy nor viable theory; that this strategy today is no longer feasible nor desirable. In a very thought-provoking essay he advocates a strategy of competition as opposed to containment. This strategy		

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would invoke a proactive theory ~~vice~~ ^{versus} our current reactive theory. Under a strategy of competition, we would apply our economic power and pursue a military strategy designed to enhance the deterrent credibility and capability of our conventional land forces through increased strategic deployment. The advocated strategy of competition would dispel four geopolitical myths: (a) threat of USSR global domination; (b) Soviet hegemony is leading an international order of global Marxism; (c) the Soviet Union and her proxies are responsible for the revolutionary movements within developing nations; and (d) that nuclear arms reductions should be undertaken only when this nation can negotiate from a position of strength in terms of PART III parity or superiority with the Soviet Union. ←

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Prepared by

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15 April 1982

United States Army War College

Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013

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The following hypothetical statement was made by the Secretary of State (designate) appearing before his confirmation hearing conducted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 21 January 1985.

"Good morning, gentlemen. I am pleased and honored for this opportunity to appear before this confirmation hearing for my appointment as Secretary of State. I look forward to your questions and candid discussion. First, however, I would like to make an opening statement that addresses the state of the world and specifically our national strategy.

The United States is today not as great a nation or superpower as it perceives itself to be nor is it as great as it can be. The difference between what we are today, a superpower in decline in terms of influence and prestige, and where we will be tomorrow will be determined to a large extent by the national strategy we pursue.

In order to understand the state of the world today one must look at the nations that have most influenced global events since the end of World War II. Those nations are the United States and the Soviet Union. Both nations entered the war as allies and potential global superpowers and both have become undisputed superpowers and enemies. Since the end of World War II our national strategy in dealing with the Soviet Union's quest for expansion has been based on varying strategies of containment. Our theory being such a strategy would contain at worst and roll back at best Soviet expansion and the proliferation of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Our strategy of containing the Soviet Union was perhaps a feasible strategy when first implemented during the Truman Administration. This nation was undeniably the strongest nation in the world militarily and economically and had been spared the ravages of war on its own soil. We were also the sole possessor of the most terrifying and destructive weapon conceived and employed by mankind. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had clearly borne the brunt of the war in terms of human losses and, although potentially a superpower, the Soviet leadership's desire to expand their influence was not matched by their capacity, capability, nor national will. In short, our nation had the luxury of applying a strategy of containment because we possessed the necessary means to pursue such a strategy.

In retrospect, however, our grand strategy of containment has proven to be neither an effective strategy nor viable theory. This strategy has for the most part resulted in a continuing and unresolved series of global crises ranging from the Korean conflict in the 1950's, to the Vietnam experience of the 1960's and 1970's to the Caribbean, Southwest Asia, and Africa dilemmas of the 1980's. These crises represent only a few of the examples I would point to in stressing that our strategy of containment has not prevented the expansion of Soviet influence beyond its post-World War II borders and sphere of influence. Moreover, I would further submit that our theory of containing Soviet influence and specifically Marxist-Leninist ideology has caused this

nation to support ill fated authoritarian regimes evidenced by events in Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, and Nicaragua. Finally, our strategy of containment has not influenced nor prevented the Soviet Union from developing into a contending superpower who today and for the foreseeable future represents a major geopolitical influence.

I am not here today on a "witch hunt" nor to simply criticize the architects of our containment strategy. After all, it has been a bipartisan national strategy implemented by Democratic and Republican Administrations alike and supported by Congress since its implementation. I am suggesting, however, that sufficient time has elapsed and events have occurred which would indicate that our strategy of containing the Soviet Union as the means of protecting American vital interests is neither feasible nor desirable. It is a strategy that in retrospect did not recognize the realities of the world as they existed at the time and will not meet the geopolitical realities of tomorrow.

The world's "power brokers," nations capable of influencing international affairs, are no longer limited to only this nation and the Soviet Union. We have seen other developed and developing nations and regions rapidly become major powers in their right -- Mexico, Japan, the People's Republic of China, Western Europe, and the Middle East. While these nations and regions may not today match the U.S. or Soviets across the board in terms of superpower capacity, they do influence world political and economic events and their potential for further growth and international influence is significant. Therefore, it is crucial that our nation face the geopolitical reality that the world can no longer be viewed in the traditional "bipolarized," or East-West context, in which foreign nations are perceived as either being with us or the Soviet Union. A reality which accurately reflects a world today in which increasingly more nations are defining their own vital interests in terms beyond those of the traditional ideological "Cold War" context.

One paramount weakness of our strategy of containment is that it has been for all intent and purposes a strategy of confrontation. It is a strategy which when viewed by the Soviet Union is a rebuke, if not an open challenge, to their perceived, and I would submit legitimate, position as a competing world superpower. This is not an unreasonable perception nor claim on their part when considering how far and quickly the Soviet Union has come since their revolution earlier in this century. Notwithstanding major internal and external conflicts the Soviet Union has survived and established itself as a remarkably resilient, cohesive, nationalistic, and patriotic nation -- a nation that obviously has not and will not conduct its internal or external affairs according to our national strategy to "contain" them. In fact, our strategy of containment has tended to exacerbate rather than improve relations with the Soviet Union and as a result poses a major and continuing obstacle in achieving global stability and eventual arms reductions.

As you by now can surmise, my view of the strategy this nation has followed vis-a-vis the Soviet Union since the end of World War II has been flawed at best. If this strategy continues to underpin our domestic and foreign policies our national interests as well as our effectiveness as a world superpower will undoubtedly face continued decline. We need to embark today toward a more effective strategy, one which recognizes the geopolitical realities of today's

world, one in which focuses not only on the Soviet Union but addresses all nations of the world, and one which articulates our role as a global superpower.

The strategy that this administration proposes our nation move toward would be one of replacing our futile efforts to contain the Soviet Union and the proliferation of Marxist ideology with one that relies on the proactive theory of competing with rather than confronting our adversaries -- a strategy of competition as opposed to containment. Such a strategy would enable our country to more efficiently and effectively allocate the necessary means to meet and maintain our national interests while simultaneously improving world economic and social conditions. Conditions leading to the restoration and maintenance of a more stabilized and peaceful world order. Specifically, a national strategy which calls for redirection of our economic and military means to better meet our national interests. A strategy that dispells geopolitical myths under our traditional strategy of containment.

A strategy of competition envisions a deemphasis in the traditional rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union by viewing the Soviets as one of a growing number of world powers, all of whom are competing for growing influence in terms of access to resources, increased economic growth, and assistance to developing countries. In effect, this strategy recognizes the decline of traditional East-West alliances borne out of World War II and promotes instead diplomatic, economic, and social ties between nations regardless of their political ideology or present alliance. For the most part, our adversaries should be viewed more in terms of "competitors" or consumers who represent untapped sources of foreign investment opportunities. These potential economic markets would eventually include all nations of Eastern Europe, as well as Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and North Korea. Don't misconstrue what is being said here. A strategy of competition by no means implies that our nation legitimizes or promotes political ideologies and values alien to those of our own. It serves, rather, as a framework with which to expand our influence by recognizing the strengths of our nation as well as the weaknesses of our adversaries. An impartial observer would have to conclude that today's contending superpowers together with their respective allies have their respective strengths and weaknesses. The West having tremendous economic vitality with declining relative military capability and the East having tremendous military capability but with inherent economic weaknesses. These realities are a result of respective political and socioeconomic systems that can be expected to remain in effect for the future.

Under a strategy of competition, the first major redirection involves the application of our economic power. Specifically, this strategy places maximum emphasis and resources toward meeting our vital interests through economic means designed to strengthen our economic and social conditions as well as those of foreign nations. It is our economic means and the interdependency of geoeconomics rather than military means which underpins a strategy of competition. A strategy which recognizes that this nation's "free market" economic system has consistently demonstrated that the United States represents an economic force that none can equal much less surpass today and for the foreseeable future.

This strategy relies upon maintaining "economic force" superiority and its employment in our relations with traditional "enemies" rather than the use or threat of use of military force we have pursued under a containment strategy. This is not a novel concept. This nation demonstrated our economic capacity and willingness to employ it with the reconstruction of our previous enemies -- Germany and Japan -- immediately following World War II. This successful application of economic force, however, required redesignating former "enemies" as peaceful competitors requiring nation building initiatives to foster long term political, social, and economic stability. It is significant to note that no other nation had before nor since undertaken such bold and proactive foreign policy initiatives which met our national interests as well as those of our former adversaries. This application of geoeconomic power, however, has not been properly employed since the success of these programs. A strategy of competition envisions continuance of such initiatives. We must aggressively compete with existing and rising economic powers to bolster trade relations and foreign investment with developing nations of the Third World and particularly those susceptible to revolutionary movements. Such bold initiatives obviously are not without cost and require national resources and resolve to subsidize, in the short term, developing nations until they become viable and self-sustaining economic competitors similar to West Germany and Japan. Application of economic force, however, will require moving towards normalizing relations with nations such as Cuba, Vietnam, and Nicaragua. Unlike Germany and Japan, however, we need not militarily defeat our adversaries today in order to further our national interests. Our adversaries, however, are not going to renounce Marxism as an economic model until that model is shown to be inferior to that of Capitalism. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence to support the claim that Marxist economics as practiced to date has been an admitted failure leading most Marxist nations to the brink of bankruptcy. Our nation's economic force has the potential and capacity to out compete with any Marxist regimes today and for the future. If discretely applied, it clearly represents the most viable and effective means within our nation's capability to further not only our national interests but those of other nations as well.

The application of economic force should not be interpreted as traditional foreign aid or "give away" programs, nor as a moral responsibility of redistributing our national resources to foreign nations. What this strategy envisions is the strengthening of our national economy through the strengthening of global economics by a mixture of "carrot and stick" initiatives through trade preferences, foreign assistance, multilateral lending programs and the like. Such economic programs, however, by themselves will not constitute the means to foster the development of better relations with our adversaries nor will they guarantee the removal of social, political, and economic conditions within those nations and particularly those of the Third World. Our nation's economic power does, however, provide a peaceful means that can be employed where other traditional military means are no longer feasible nor practical. Application of economic force under a strategy of competition, must be proactive. The recent Caribbean Basin Initiative, while necessary, was prompted as a reactive and token economic initiative to contain further Marxist influence in this hemisphere. Such incremental and belated use of our economic power to compete with our adversaries is as futile as the incremental application of military power.

The second major redirection of our national strategy involves our military strategy. Heretofore, our containment strategy dealt with the Soviet and Marxist-Leninist expansion primarily through the use or threat of use of military power. In retrospect this may have been understandable given our unchallenged military capability at the end of World War II. Decades have passed, however, since we possessed a one-sided advantage of military power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. We have witnessed our virtual "monopoly" of conventional and nuclear forces of the 1940's move to that of "superiority" in the 1950's and 1960's to that of "parity" of the 1970's to that of Soviet conventional "superiority" of the 1980's. Thus, while our military strategy was perhaps rationally coupled with our containment strategy, the shift in the balance of military power to the Soviet Union demands not only redefining our national strategy but our military strategy as well. Our current military strategy seeks to regain conventional parity with the Soviets and will require an increasingly larger share if not total mobilization of our finite national resources. I submit that such a commitment and expenditure of our national resources at the expense of our domestic needs and economic vitality is neither prudent nor realistically feasible in our nation today.

Under a strategy of competition we should pursue a military strategy designed to enhance the deterrent credibility and capability of our conventional land forces through increased strategic deployment. Today if military power is to be an effective and credible means of deterring or resolving political conflict in a global context, it must similarly be capable of immediate projection and employment in a global context. Specifically, military power must be brought to bear in terms of hours and days, not weeks and months, if it is to be a credible and capable means of deterring or resolving conflict. A strategy of competition refutes the "long war" scenario myth which envisions superpowers engaging in sustained conflict together with mobilization efforts reminiscent of World War II. This strategy recognizes that while both the United States and Soviet Union possess awesome conventional and nuclear arsenals, ironically neither superpower can militarily defeat the other without resorting or responding to the use of nuclear weapons. Simply stated the awesome lethality and nonstainable nature of the modern battlefield coupled with the threat of horizontal escalation by either superpower establishes the fact that this nation and the Soviet Union are not destined for war with one another. Thus, conventional forces similar to nuclear forces of both superpowers are for deterrence rather than actual employment.

A strategy of competition would require that our military forces outcompete the Soviet Union in terms of strategic mobility and conventional force projection. Specifically, our military strategy requires a fourth "leg" be added to our nuclear triad consisting of rapid strategic forces capable of projecting land forces by air and supported primarily through aircraft carrier battle groups. The forces envisioned would require significant increase in strategic airlift with a corresponding decrease in manpower, force structure, and resources. The Army, consisting of a total of nine active divisions organized into three corps, would possess the capability to rapidly spearhead land forces into as many as three hemispheres as compared to our current projection capability to one hemisphere. Naval and Marine forces envisioned would require no more than the currently programmed fifteen carrier battle groups and three active Marine divisions. The Air Force envisioned would require less tactical and increasingly more strategic airlift capability.

This military strategy also differs from our traditional forward basing or "maginot Line" philosophy under containment. Land forces would not be tied down to static missions such as in Europe and Korea in anticipation of refighting World War II and/or the Korean conflict. Those forces should be recognized as "de facto" political peacekeeping forces in view of their limited size and inability to affect the outcome of hostilities. Accordingly, these forces should be reduced to a minimum consistent with a peacekeeping role which would insure a sufficient "tripwire" presence and commitment to allies while substantially reducing costs associated with maintaining our current force level. Adapting this military strategy, therefore, increases our conventional force deterrent through increased availability as well as strategic capability for global commitment to multiple hemispheres.

Moving towards a strategy of competition finally dispels four geopolitical myths perpetuated under our strategy of containment. The first myth is the threat of Soviet Union global domination. Although possessing historical and ideological expansionary characteristics, the Soviet Union's track record of successful expansionism in the aggregate has been a failure. While Soviet influence has been seen in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia and to a lesser extent in the Caribbean Basin, the Soviet reversals experienced with China, Egypt, Sudan, the Caribbean (Jamaica), and the potential liberalization of her Eastern European allies demonstrates Soviet vulnerabilities and limitations in matching rhetoric with results. The Soviet Union's failure to sustain global influence is clearly attributable to the inherent flaws of its political and socio-economic system as opposed to our containment philosophy. Ironically, it is the Soviet's reliance on military power to achieve and sustain international prestige and influence that serves to contain rather than expand her influence in the long term.

A second and related myth is that of Soviet hegemony in leading an international order of global Marxism. History has shown that no single nation has demonstrated the capacity to sustain any semblance of a Communist or Marxist-Leninist political, military, or economic alliance which threatens global stability. The independent nature of such Marxist nations as the Peoples Republic of China and Yugoslavia suggests that any real solidarity of Marxist nations are strengthened only in proportion to the extent that this country isolates those nations. These nations should be considered as independent and decoupled from the Soviet Union as opposed to being aligned with the "Communist Block" under our containment strategy.

The third myth dispelled by a strategy of competition is that the Soviet Union and her proxies are responsible for the revolutionary movements within developing nations. Revolution by definition is a means by which political and socio-economic inequities are changed in societies. A means that long preceded Marxist-Leninist ideology and related movements. Our Declaration of Independence addresses such inequities which caused not only our revolution against a repressive government but inequities found in developing nations throughout the world today. Our revolution, like that of the Soviet Union, was violent in nature. This nation, however, unlike the Soviet Union and other

Marxist regimes has elected to ignore or repress internally organized and nationistically borne revolutionary movements primarily due to our illfounded paranoia of a perceived global Marxist threat. A strategy of competition, would compete with potential Marxist or "violent" revolution through the application of necessary political and socio-economic reforms to promote economic or "peaceful" revolution. Such a strategy to be successful, however, must be proactive in providing resources and reforms to developing nations prior to, not after, Marxist revolution is perceived to be the only viable alternative.

The final myth dispelled is that nuclear arms reductions should be undertaken only when this nation can negotiate from a position of strength in terms of parity or superiority with the Soviet Union. Under a strategy of competition, this nation has the opportunity to seize the lead in reducing the threshold of nuclear conflagration that has plagued the world for generations. Such an opportunity, however, requires redefining the level of nuclear weapons required by this nation and the Soviet Union in protecting our respective national interests. To date both superpowers have sought to achieve an acceptable balance of nuclear weapons in terms of superiority at best or parity at worst. Accordingly, both nations have developed nuclear arsenals which have achieved many times over the capacity of exterminating not only one another's society but the entire world's population as well. Thus, nuclear parity and superiority must be viewed in terms of "overkill" which serves to promote rather than deter the threat of eventual nuclear war. A strategy of competition defines the prudent level of nuclear weapons in terms of the absolute minimum, or sufficient level, required to destroy one's enemy or enemies. No more and no less. Both superpowers have long since exceeded such sufficiency and can reduce accordingly, mutually or unilaterally, without endangering our respective national interests. The level of sufficiency to be reduced to, however, cannot be expected to be balanced or the same for both superpowers. This nation's level of sufficiency required is less than the Soviet's due primarily to the threat or perceived threat facing both superpowers. While this nation has never been invaded or threatened by its hemispheric neighbors, the Soviet Union has historically experienced repeated invasions and hostilities with nations along its borders and this threat, real or perceived, must be recognized by the United States. Simply stated, the Soviet Union historically and even today faces more potential enemies than the United States. Thus, a "higher level" of nuclear weapon sufficiency by the Soviet Union should not be viewed as unacceptable or as a threat to our national interests. Nor should the United States delay its reduction according to that of the Soviet Union since our national security interests will only be jeopardized should our nuclear arsenal fall below that of a sufficient level capable of destroying the Soviet Union.

In summary, let me state that a strategy of competition considers the threat to our nations security to be greater than the traditional "Soviet and Marxist threat" perpetuated under our containment strategy. Equally, if not more threatening to our national interests is the inability to meet our growing domestic needs; our failure to sustain economic vitality and growth without recession, and finally the steady decline in our nation's prestige and influence as the free world's leading superpower. Broadening the scope of the actual threat this nation faces requires broadening the nature of our country's

national strategy as well as Congress' role in formulating and implementing that strategy. The strategy I have discussed today is obviously in theory only similar to the containment theory at its inception. Therefore the theory of competition will require the application of policies, resources, and most importantly bipartisan Congressional support for it to be a successful national strategy. This new administration fully realizes the political reality that the President may propose national strategy but it is Congress who largely determines its successful implementation. There should be no doubt that this administration entered office with a clear mandate from the American people calling for a rebirth of American strength and prestige in domestic as well as foreign affairs. A mandate for lessening global instability and the threat of nuclear holocaust. Rebuilding America, however, must start with rebuilding a national strategy which maximizes the development and employment of our vast natural and economic resources; a strategy which is proactive rather than reactive in assisting developing nations pursue peaceful rather than violent revolution; a strategy which links and guarantees our long term economic growth and vitality with that of foreign nations; a strategy which establishes and strengthens economic ties with our adversaries; a strategy which provides our nation with a military force requiring substantially fewer resources but possessing a greater and more credible capability to deter conventional and nuclear war; and finally a strategy which seeks to regain and maintain our superiority as a global superpower by competing with rather than confronting the Soviet Union. The time and opportunity to pursue a new national strategy has never been greater nor more pressing in order to provide this nation and the rest of the world with a vision of America's destined global role as we approach the twenty-first century. To paraphrase former President Reagan "If not us . . . who?; if not now . . . when?"

Gentlemen, this completes my prepared statement. What are your questions?"